

तमसो भा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN
VISWA BHARATI
LIBRARY

824 : 954

N 719

THE MALADY OF THE CENTURY
AND
OTHER ESSAYS

By the same author :

'THE COMING RACE
TOWARDS THE LIGHT
THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE
MALADY OF THE CENTURY
AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

1943
SRI AUROBINDO LIBRARY
MADRAS

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE MALADY OF THE CENTURY ..	1
ASPECTS OF MODERNISM .. .	12
MODERNISM: AN ORIENTAL INTERPRETATION ..	22
THE OTHER ASPECT OF EUROPEAN CULTURE ..	30
THE SPIRITUAL GENIUS OF INDIA ..	41
DIVINE HUMANISM	58
SOME THOUGHTS ON THE UNTHINKABLE ..	71
THE STANDPOINT OF INDIAN ART ..	77
ART AND KATHARSIS	90
HAMLET: A CRISIS OF THE EVOLVING SOUL ..	96
MODERNIST POETRY	107
TAGORE—POET AND SEER ..	117

Published by
SRI AUROBINDO LIBRARY
VEPERY, MADRAS

All Rights Reserved

PRINTED AT
THE BANGALORE PRESS, MYSORE ROAD, BANGALORE CITY

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Essays collected in this volume were written between the years 1928 and 1941, and were originally published in various periodicals. They are reprinted here with very minor changes.

"The Malady of the Century" and "The Stand-point of Indian Art" appeared in the *Modern Review* (1930 and 1932 respectively); "Aspects of Modernism" in the *Aryan Path* (1934); "Hamlet", "Divine Humanism" and "Modernism" in the *Triveni* (1936, 1937 and 1938 respectively); "Some Thoughts on the Unthinkable" in the *Sunday Times* (1935); "The Other Aspect of European Culture", "The Spiritual Genius of India", "Art and Katharsis" and "Modernist Poetry" in the *Visva Bharati Quarterly* (1928, 1929, 1936 and 1941 respectively); and the last Essay, "Tagore—Poet and Seer" appeared in the Tagore Birthday Number, *Visva Bharati Quarterly* (1941).

The author's acknowledgment is due to the Editors of these Journals for this republication.

THE MALADY OF THE CENTURY

I

What is the malady of our age? It is that man has lost touch with his soul. There were ages no doubt in the past, dark periods, when man's soul retired into the background, was obscured or veiled; but only to-day there seems to have occurred a definite cleavage, a clear sundering. Man no longer drags the lengthening chain that tied him, in spite of everything, to his divine essence; he has cut it clean and let himself adrift.

The Eternal Enemy appeared and spread out before our enchanted eyes the panorama of earth's riches and glories, not merely riches of comfort and pleasure and well-being, but glories of power and knowledge; we could not resist this time; we hurled ourselves headlong into the valley of temptation, delivering, as the price of the bargain, our soul. Indeed, we are masters of many fields, our knowledge

and power extend over an immense variety of regions, uncharted till now. Even like Vishnu the Dwarf, our consciousness has covered with its three strides the entire creation, barring that domain alone where the soul resides.

Our mind, our life and our body have become to-day far more conscious and consciously powerful—each has found itself and is big with its own proper value. But what was familiarly known as the mind of the mind, the life of the life, the body of the body has vanished and all it meant, The pith has been taken out, we are now playing with the empty stalk; the secret thread on which the pearls of life-movements were strung has been removed and they lie about scattered and disjointed. We have enriched our possessions, we have made ourselves more complex and multiple in our becoming: the telescope and the microscope in the physical world, and a subtler sense in the mind also, have extended the superficies of our consciousness. But with all that and in our haste to be busy about too many things, we

have forgotten and left out of account the one thing needful.

We have sought to increase our consciousness, but away from the centre of consciousness; so what we have actually gained is not an increase, in the sense of a growth or elevation of consciousness, but an accumulation of consciousnesses, that is to say, many forms and external powers or applications of consciousness. A multiplicity of varied and independent movements of consciousness that jostle and hurt and limit one another, because they are not organized round a fundamental unity, forms the personality of the modern man, which is therefore tending to become on the whole more and more ill-balanced and neurasthenic and attitudinizing, in comparison with the simpler and less equivocal temperament that mankind had in the past. And a good part of the catholicity or liberalism or toleration that appears to be more in evidence in the present-day human consciousness is to be attributed not so much to the sense of unity or identity, that is the natural and inevitable outcome of a real growth

in consciousness, but rather to the doubt and indecision and hesitation, to the agnosticism and dilettantism and cynicism of a pluralistic consciousness.

Cut away from the soul, from the central fount of its being, the human consciousness has been, as it were, desiccated and pulverized; it has been thrown wholly upon its multifarious external movements and bears the appearance of a thirsty shifting expanse of desert sands.

II

Indeed a peculiar aridity has invaded the modern consciousness; the sap has dried that once made life fresh and green and glad. It is not that we are turned away from life; on the contrary, we are attached to it more than ever,—but the attachment has come upon us like a morbid hunger. And so we have the lust for life, but know not the joy of life. We lay an inordinate stress upon the body, upon what is external and superficial, upon the matter of life, and suffer from a simultaneous recoil and disgust for it. Human nature has been

rent in twain and life has lost its unity
of rhythm.

The old-world had no experience of this self-division. It had a frank and full joy in things of life, even in their most material forms. And when it turned away from life, it did so in the same spirit, of joy and frankness and wholeness. There was not this immixture, this Hamletian "to be or not to be"—an unregenerate, barbaric life-impulse "sicklied o'er with the pale cast o' thought" that troubles the modern consciousness.

In old days, while we enjoyed life we were not without the taste for life. We were youthful and in full possession of the *dharma* of youth. And when we left the world and life we cherished no regret; we did it whole-heartedly. We were young; and our movements were whole and entire. It may be said that that was an age of unthinking innocence; but in the attempt to gain the arid richness of an old-age consciousness, we have lost the simplicity, the spontaneity and the integrality of our non-age. Yes, we have eaten of the fruit of

knowledge and our youth is the price that we have paid. With our present nature we not merely enjoy, but we want to know that we enjoy; we cannot enjoy a thing, unless in the very act we weigh and dissect and scrutinize the object and ourselves too, into the bargain.

This knowledge, or rather, this curiosity does not arise from any depth of our being; it is the product of the meddlesome superficial brain-mind. We have become self-conscious; a vigilant self-consciousness is now the invariable coefficient of all our movements, but it is a self-consciousness that has deviated into mere mental introspection and intellectual analysis. It was the soul's consciousness, although perhaps more often from behind the veil, that once inspired and enlivened human nature in its youth; and life was after all a thing of beauty and joy—for the soul is the one *Rasa* of existence. We have deposed the Divine King; an anarchy now reigns in human nature which has become the battle-ground of qualities and forces that are, if not always more crude, at least, invariably

crooked and perverse. We live and move in the cold and blighting, and withal shallow, glare of the brain-mind.'

III

We of the modern age know many things—perhaps too many; and we yearn and strive to know yet more. We are never content with the knowledge that we have at the moment; our mind is always restive to leap beyond its immediate ken, thinking always that the secret of existence is to be found in what escapes its scrutiny, in what lies just outside the limits of what we happen to know. We are never sure of our knowledge. We are rich in curiosity, subtle in guessing; but always there lacks the sense of assurance and achievement. A certain unrest or *malaise* pursues our activities, something that gives to our most perfect creation, the impress of an experiment, of what is tentative, transitional, temporary.

The ancients, on the contrary, knew not many things—not so many as we know; but what they knew they knew

well, they were sure of their knowledge. Their creations were not perhaps on the whole as rich and varied and subtle— even in a certain sense as deep as those of modern humanity; but they were finished and completed things, net and clear and full of power. The simple unambiguous virile line that we find in Kalidasa or in the Ajanta, in Homer or in the Parthenon, no longer comes out of the hands of a modern artist. Our delight is in the complexity and turbidity of the composition; we are not satisfied with richness only, we require a certain tortuousness and tangledness in the movement. We love the intermingling of many tints, the play of light dying away into haze and mist and obscurity, of shades that blur the sharpness of the contour. Our preoccupation, in Art, is how to create the *impression* of the many in its all-round simultaneity of forms and movements. The ancients were more simple and modest; they were satisfied with *expressing* one thing at a time and that simply done.

The ancient Rishis were worshippers

of the Sun and the Day; they were called Finders of the Day, Discoverers of the Solar World. They knew what they were about and they sought to make their meaning plain to others who cared to go to them. They were clear in their thought, direct in their perception; their feelings, however deep, were never obscure. We meet in their atmosphere and in their creative activity no circumambulating chiaroscuro, nothing of the turbid magic that draws us to-day towards the uncertain, the unexpected and the disconcerting. It is a world of certitude, of solid reality—even if it be on the highest spiritual levels of consciousness—presenting a bold and precise and clear outline. When we hear them speak we feel they are uttering self-evident truths; there is no need to pause and question. At least so they were to their contemporaries; but the spokesman of our age must needs be a riddle even to ourselves.

To the moderns truth is merely relative; the absolute is an ever-receding reality and has only a theoretical existence. The true reality, whatever it is, we can never reach or possess; we may say that we

are approaching it nearer and nearer, but shall never come up to it—there is no end to our pursuit. An eternally progressive *rapprochement* between our knowledge or realization and the object of it is our destiny and also perhaps our privilege. It is this movement without end or finality that is life and all its zest and beauty. The ancients, on the other hand, aimed and worked at *siddhi*, that is to say, definite and final achievement. This did not mean, however, that there was a dead stop and they stagnated after *siddhi*. It means that the consciousness having undergone a change in character, takes a different kind of movement altogether: it proceeds now from truth to truth, from light to light, from *siddhi* to *siddhi*. The modern consciousness moves, on the other hand, from uncertainty to uncertainty, at best, from the more obscure to the less obscure.

Ours is an age of hunger—hunger for knowledge, for power, for enjoyment. But we do not know, nor care to know, the conditions under which alone such hunger can really be appeased. First of all, we think that to satisfy our hunger we have

simply to go straight and pounce upon the object; we do not consider it at all necessary to look beforehand to our assimilative nature and capacity. Our hunger serves only to multiply the objects of hunger; and the objects of hunger again multiply our hunger; this is the vicious circle in which we are entrapped. We hungered for progress, but what we have succeeded in getting is change and movement, speed and restlessness; we yearned for light, we have found only information; we looked for power, we have mastered a few tricks or clever manipulations; we aspired for happiness, we have stopped with stray pleasures and hence with dissatisfaction.

To relieve life of this mingled strain and tension, to lift it out of this ambiguity and uncertainty, to free it from this gravitational force that drives it towards what is superficial and external—to endow it with its real worth, we must find and possess life at a higher level, at its unspoilt source; we must first draw back and re-establish, this time consciously and integrally, the lost connection with our soul, the Divine in our being.

ASPECTS OF MODERNISM

"Unity was the sheet-anchor* of Science up to now. But the latest theories seem to break up the universe into a mass of independent constituents each acting for itself. No doubt there is one Force still (if magnetism and electricity can be reduced to one formula, as is sought to be done by Einstein), but it is a discontinuous unity in its manifestation at least. Science seems to be coming away from a materialistic Adwaita towards a restatement of the Sankhya idea."—SRI AUROBINDO.

Every age has claimed to be modern and sought to establish its characteristic newness, the hall-mark that separates it from the preceding age.

How then does the twentieth century propose to mark out its difference from the past? "Science and the scientific outlook," many would answer. But to others that difference itself might appear antiquated. For, strictly speaking, science was the keynote of the nineteenth century; and although we of the twentieth are enjoying its fruits, putting it to more practical use than our predecessors did, yet it is they who embodied its spirit, its special and proper rule of light and life. We have not discarded the gift, but assimilated it and even

seem to have outgrown it; we have added to it or extended and developed it.

Science indeed gave a very decided turn to the slowly advancing humanity. It brought with it something that meant in the march of evolution a *saltum*, a leap wide and clear; it landed man all of a sudden into a new world, a new state of consciousness. It is this state of consciousness, the fundamental way of being, inculcated by the scientific spirit that is of capital importance and possesses a survival value. It is not the *content* of Science, but its *intent*, not its riches, but its secret inspiration, its motive power, that will give us a right understanding of the change it has effected. The material aspect of the event has lost much of its value; the mechanical inventions and discoveries, bringing in their train a revolution in the external organization of life, have become a matter of course, and almost a matter of the past. But the reactions set up in the consciousness itself, the variations brought about in the very stuff and constitution of life still maintain a potency for the future and are to be counted.

The scientific spirit, in one word, is rationalisation—rationalisation of Mind as well as of Life. With regard to Mind, rationalisation means to get knowledge exclusively on the data of the senses; it is the formulation, in laws and principles, of facts observed by the physical organs, these laws and principles being the categories of the arranging, classifying, generalising faculty, called reason; its methodology also demands that the laws are to be as few as possible embracing as many facts as possible. Rationalisation of life means the government of life in accordance with these laws, so that the wastage in natural life due to the diversity and disparity of facts may be eliminated, at least minimised, and all movements of life ordered and organised in view of a single and constant purpose (which is perhaps the enhancement of the value of life). This rationalisation means further, in effect, mechanisation or efficiency, as its protagonists would prefer to call it. However, mechanistic efficiency, whether in the matter of knowledge or of life—of mind or of morals—was the motto of the early period of the gospel of science,

the age of Huxley and Haeckel, of Bentham and the Mills. The formula no longer holds good either in the field of pure knowledge or in its application to life; it does not embody the aspiration and outlook of the contemporary mind, in spite of such inveterate rationalists as Russell and Wells or even Shaw (in *Back to Methuselah*, for example), who seem to be already becoming an anachronism in the present age.

The contemporary urge is not towards rationalisation, but rather towards *irrationalisation*. Orthodox science itself is taking greater and greater cognisance to-day of the irrational movements of nature, even of physical nature. Intuition and instinct are now welcomed as surer and truer instruments of knowledge and action than reason.

Another special feature of the modern consciousness is its "multiple sightedness". The world, as it is presented to us, is no more than an assemblage of view-points; and each point of observation forms its own world-system. There is no one single ultimate truth; if there is any, there is no

possibility of its being known or perceived by the mind or the senses. Things exist in relation to one another and for us they have no intrinsic existence apart from the relations. The instrument itself that perceives is the resultant of a system of relations. A truth is only a view-point; and as the view-point shifts, the truth also varies accordingly. The cult of Relativity is a significant expression of the modern consciousness.

Intimately connected with relativity and multiplicity is the principle of fragmentation or atomism (perhaps one should now say "electronism")—that forms another characteristic element of modernism. The universe, on a final analysis, is now found to be a concourse of vagrant electric charges. Even likewise, human personality too has no longer its old-world character and consistency of being made of one undivided piece—a monolithic structure; it is a composite of innumerable personalities, big and small, apparent and hidden, all huddled together in a case called the body, which itself is not more stable than the shifting desert sands.

It is this pluralisation which has resulted in a necessary polarisation in the human consciousness. We have gained a power which was not only rare but perhaps totally absent in the old world, at least in the general mind; we have reached in a novel way that very wideness or wholeness which was at the outset negatived by the urge towards separateness and parcellation. Thus the modern mind can take in more view-points than one—even contrary ones—at the same time. The individual has acquired the capacity—to put it in popular language—to enter into another's skin, not to be confined to its own outlook, limited within its linear groove, but to be able, with ease and grace to look through the eyes of others, even though they be on the other side of the arena. A wide and supple, large and subtle perception that goes round the entire contour of the observed object, not a perspective but a global view, is a characteristic capacity of the modern mind. We can see the same thing from all angles and distances; we can turn our gaze upon ourselves; we can see ourselves not only with our own way of looking but also as others

see us, with equal detachment and impartiality. At least this is the character of the cultured, the representative man of to-day. Modern art too has sought in some of its significant expressions to demonstrate this protean nature of truth and reality, to bring out the simultaneity of its multiple modes, to give a living sense of its tangled dynamism.

We spoke of the extreme atomism of modern Science that has thrown into the background the solid unity of creation and is laying emphasis for the moment more upon the division and scattering of forces than upon the cohesiveness and identity of the substratum; still that unity has not been abrogated but has been maintained on the whole, even if as an underlying note. Not only so, the reign of multiplicity, by a curious detour, is working towards a discovery of enhanced unity. The plurality of the modern consciousness is moving towards a richer and intenser unity; it is not a static, but a dynamic unity—a unity that does not suppress or merely transcend the diversity and disparity of its components but holds them together as an immanent force, and

brings forth out of each its fullness of individuality. In the same way the present-day movement towards internationalism or supra-nationalism has produced a rebound towards regionalism or infra-nationalism. And the voice of anarchism tends to be as insistent as that of collectivism.

The consciousness of yesterday was a unilateral movement. It rose up high and descended deep into the truth of things, but mostly along a single line. In the horizontal direction also, when it travelled, it effected a linear movement. The consciousness of to-day is complex and composite; it has lost much of the vertical movement; it does not very easily soar or dive, precisely because it has spread itself out in a multitude of horizontal movements. Our modern consciousness is outward-gazing and extensive; it has not the in-gathering and intensive character of the old-world consciousness; but what it has lost in depth and height, it has sought to make up in width.

Simplicity and intensity, sublimity and profundity were the most predominant qualities of man's achievement in the past; what characterises human endeavour in the

present is its wideness, richness, complexity. It can also be noted that the corruptions of these qualities likewise mark out their respective ages. Fanaticism, for example, the corruption of a good and noble thing, fidelity, means an unilateral mind carried to its extreme; it is a characteristic product of the middle ages in the West as in the East. The modern world in its stead has given us dilettantism and cynicism, corruption of largeness and catholicity.

Consciousness has two primary movements. In one it penetrates, enters straight into the heart of things; in the other it spreads out, goes about and round the object. The combination of the two powers is a rarity; ordinarily man follows the one to the exclusion of the other. The modern age in its wide curiosity has neglected the penetrative and intensive movement and is therefore marred by superficiality. It is eager to go over the entire panorama of creation at one glance, if that is possible, to have a telescopic view of things; but it has been able to take in only the surface, the skin, the crust. Even the entrance into the world of atoms and cells—of protons and

electrons, of chromosomes and genes—is not really a penetrative or intensive movement. It is only another form of the movement of pervasion or extension: it is still a going abroad, only on another line, in a different direction, but always fundamentally on the same horizontal plane. The microscope is only an inverted telescope. Our instruments are the external mind and senses and these move laterally and have not the power to leap on to a different level of vision. The earlier ages of mankind, narrow and circumscribed in many respects, possessed nevertheless that intensive and in-gathering movement, which is a kind of movement in the fourth dimension; it was a sixth sense leading into the Behind or Beyond of things.

MODERNISM : AN ORIENTAL INTERPRETATION

In the past we used to see the world, experience and express life, mainly if not exclusively, in terms of the mind and the heart. These were the two fundamental categories or basic forms in and through which we built up our universe. It was our ideas and ideals, our notions and conceptions, our imagination and sentiment that viewed and interpreted, guided and shaped our earthly existence and creativity. Whether morally or aesthetically, the domination of the mind and the heart over life was the characteristic stamp of the movement of the human spirit in the past.

Modernism means the release of life from this subjugation; it means the expression of life's own truths in its own way, life's self-determination: that is the great endeavour and achievement of to-day. It was a rationalised, emotionalised, idealised life that man sought to live and create yesterday; his art too consisted in showing life through that mask and veil, because it

MODERNISM

considered that that was the way
out, the beautiful in life.

The history of the emancipation
of different psychological domains in man
is an interesting and instructive study. For the
heart and the mind too were not always free
and autonomous. An old-world conscious-
ness was ruled or inspired by another faculty
—the religious sense. It is a sense, a faculty
that has its seat neither in the mind nor even
in the heart proper. Some would say it is
in an inmost or topmost region, the Self,
while others would relegate it to something
quite the opposite, the lowest and most ex-
ternal strand in the human consciousness,
viz., that of unconsciousness or infra-consci-
ousness, ignorance, fear, superstition.

The domination of the religious sense
reached its apogee in the Middle Ages when
it almost swallowed up and annihilated all
other faculties and movements in man. The
end of that epoch and the first beginnings of
the Modern Age were signalised by the
Mind, *i.e.*, the Reason, declaring its inde-
pendence. This was the Renaissance; and it
was then that the seed was sown of modern
science and scientism.

MALADY OF THE CENTURY

—mind in its rational mode—thus .ated, exercised in its turn a domi-
g control over man's entire nature. her members were made a subservient ietary to that which was considered the uembre par excellence in the rational animal. The seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries form the period of its rule—the former its bright period when it expressed itself in its truth and power, as embodied in what is called classicism in literature; the latter its darker phase, its decline, the manifestation of its weakness. Its death-knell was first sounded by Voltaire who symbolised the mind's destructive criticism of itself, the same which Anatole France in France and Shaw in England have continued in our days almost to a successful issue.

Rousseau brought in the positive element that determined the new poise of humanity. It was the advent of the heart, the coming in of the Romantic—the man of sentiment and sensibility.* But life had not

* Another similar cycle can be traced farther back in the past. The classicism of Græco-Latin culture dominated by mind and reason—although it was a kind

yet had its chance. Life, pure life—the biological domain—first declared its autonomy in art, for example, through the Realists and Naturalists. These pioneers, however, could bring forward mainly the facts, the constituents, the materials that compose life. The stuff was found, but the movement, life's own rhythm, was not there. It was new wine, but more or less in the old bottle. Zola or Maupassant or the Goncourts sought to express a life intrinsic and independent, but the instrument, the mould was still the old one; the manner and the movement, germane to mind and heart, continued to persist.

That mould was broken, and something of the mystery of Life's own rhythm first revealed by the Impressionists. But the Impressionists were too vague and had too much of a generalised sense to enter into the core of the matter. They touched life, caressed its contour and periphery and larger lines, but did not penetrate it, grasp and grip it, bring out the kernel, as

of higher mind and intuitive reason—was supplanted by the heart movement that Christ and the Christian cult initiated.

it were, break it and express it in its atomic structure and movement. This is what is being done to-day.

Life undefiled, without any admixture or influence whatsoever from other elements and domains—that is the one thing that we envisage and create. Life as it is in its own substance and truth, as it lives and moves in its own rhythm, life in its stark naturalness, albeit raw and crude, the living ore found in the earth's vein, unpolished but utterly authentic: this is the supreme secret of which we of the modern age are worshippers.

Thus life has come to mean to-day the life exclusively of the senses, the life that is instinctive, reflexive, automatical in its *elan*, which is beyond the control of the conscious will and intelligence, the life that is interwoven and unified with body and matter. For it was this life which could never come to its own—not even in man's primitive stage which was more or less a rigid system of taboos, religious and social, in spite of contrary appearances; it was this life which could not express freely and fully its own truth and reality in its own way, under the

domination of what are known as the higher movements of the human consciousness. Life in another sense, as part of this higher and aristocratic movement, had had some autonomy and a field and scope of its own even under the old regime. The life-force that inspires noble ambitions, high enterprises, large creations, vast enjoyments, and proud renunciations, and violent and sweeping passions, has always been to us a familiar element.

To-day, however, in pursuit of the mystery of life we have entered into darker and more obscure regions—of cells and genes, of colloid actions and neuron reactions: the elementary instincts, the primary reflexes, the tangle of short and brief vibrations, and half-articulate pulsations of the most physical and material consciousness are the stuff of the life we seek to live and to capture and mirror. The creative and active force in life as well as in art is now invested in the nervous dynamism and sensational perception. The old morals and æsthetics and the sentiments and notions around them are considered to-day merely conventional and bourgeois; they have given

place to a freer life-movement, the expression and embodiment of an unrestrained and authentic life, life in its natural, original, unspoilt (and crude and coarse) verity. We are probing into the mystery of the crust.

It appears then that we have come down perilously near the level of the sheer animal; by a curious loop in the cycle of evolution, the most civilised and enlightened type of mankind seems to be retroverting to the status of his original ancestor.

Not quite so, certainly. The consciousness (rather, the self-consciousness) that man has gained in place of the unconsciousness or semi-consciousness, characteristic of the general mass in the past, and the growing sense of individuality and personal worth, which is an expression of that consciousness, are his assets, the hall-mark of his present-day nature and outlook and activity. The consciousness may not have always been used wisely, but still it is a light that has illumined him, brought him an awareness of himself and of things, that is new and in a special way close and intimate and revealing. The light is perhaps not of

the kind that comes direct from high altitudes—it is, as it were, a transverse ray cutting aslant; nonetheless, through its grace a self-revelation and a self-valuation have been possible in spheres hitherto unsurveyed and lost in darkness, and on a scale equally unprecedented. Life has found a self-light. It is indeed as yet a glare, lurid and uncertain, but it has the capacity to develop into, and call in, the white and tranquil effulgence of the Soul-light and the Supreme Light of which it is the image and precursor.

THE OTHER ASPECT OF EUROPEAN CULTURE

Two cultures, one of Europe and the other of Asia, are now contending with each other to have sway over humanity; and it has been for some time past a moot problem with the best representatives of either, whether a synthesis, at least a reconciliation of the two is possible or not. Europe's distinctive trait, it has also been pointed out, is her hold upon life and the actualities of material existence; whereas the thing that characterises Asia as a separate organism is her grasp of the Spirit, the realities of a subtle world. Thus considered, the two need not, it is urged, be necessarily contradictory, they may as well be complementary to each other; and if mankind has the will to it, a union, even a fusion of them to form a richer and more complete whole, should not be altogether impracticable.

But there is a point of doubt. Two different and distinct entities, in order to be complementary, must first of all be commensurable; that is to say, both must belong

to the same order of reality, there must lie between them something fundamentally common which would give them a similar mode of being, a parallel rhythm of movement. Otherwise, two entities that are not only different but disparate can never be brought together to complement each other.

So it is contended by some dissident voices that Europe and Asia are, as a matter of fact, different and disparate and incomensurable bodies—they belong to categories that are as poles asunder; and therefore the twain can and shall never merge nor meet. For Europe, on the one hand, with her materialistic and mechanistic culture, forms one indivisible unity, her entire life in its manifold expression is moulded according to a definite pattern, forming a closed circle; on the other hand, Asia basing herself upon the spiritual and the other world has in quite a different way fashioned an altogether different culture-complex. One cannot take some spiritual element out of Asiatic culture and mix it with some profane element extracted from European culture, serving the product to humanity as its universal Ideal. The details—the multitudinous forms

and forces—that make up an integral whole are irrevocably determined by a basic intuition which is the soul of that integrality; the entire edifice is a compact unity—each piece of brick, every bit of space is in its own place and has its own function by virtue of a dominant, a compelling Idea. Like an object of art, even like a living organism, a “body cultural” is inviolable in its self-sufficient and jealous completeness.

In other words, the difference between Europe and Asia is the difference between two species; and there can be no fruitful union between them. So the meeting and fusion of Europe and Asia is nothing but a barren ideal, a chimera. It is a hope and a desire cherished, no doubt, by sentimental visionaries, but it is bound to come to grief in the end, when brought to face the realities of life and the stern forces that shape the forms of the concrete world.

But is it after all an incontrovertible fact that Europe is Europe and Asia Asia? It is now too late in the day to maintain that Asia was always dreamy and metaphysical and that she always lacked the hold upon concrete reality. On the contrary, every new

additional information regarding her past is continually bringing to light the fact that Asia was no less efficient than Europe in matters worldly and material; she had as great, if not greater control over the brute reality than the latter can claim even to-day. Only her conquest of the spiritual realms was also as efficient and sovereign.

Nor is it a fact that Europe is and has been merely profane and materialistic in her outlook and attainment. The godless and mechanistic civilisation which is rampant to-day in Europe is a distemper of comparatively recent growth. Its farthest limit does not go beyond the sixteenth or the fifteenth century when the first seeds were sown by the Humanists of the Renaissance. It sprouted with the rationalists of the eighteenth century and the French Revolution cleared the ground for its free and untrammelled growth. But only in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries has it reached such vast and disconcerting proportions as to swallow all Europe's other motives and velleities and to appear as the only form of her life-expression. But in the earlier centuries, those that preceded the

New Enlightenment, Europe had a different conception of culture and civilisation, she possessed almost another soul. The long period that is known as the medieval age was not after all so dark and unregenerate as it has been the familiar custom to represent it. Christian Europe—the Europe of cathedrals and monasteries, of saints and sages, of St. Francis and St. Theresa, of Boehme and Bernard, of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine, had an enlightenment all her own, which was real and living and dynamic, possessing a far-extending and deeply penetrating influence; in as much as it was this that called into being and fashioned the more abiding forces, which underlie Europe's cultural life and social institutions, although latterly “fallen on evil days and on evil tongues”.

Even the still more ancient Græco-Latin Europe which was not, to a general and apparent view, quite spiritual or other-worldly, was yet not so exclusively materialistic and profane as modern Europe. Classical culture was rationalistic, without doubt; but that rationalism was the function of a sublimated intelligence and a

refined sensibility and served as a vehicle for a Higher Perception—a ratiocinative and ultra-logical mind, like that of Socrates, could yet be so passive and upgazing as to receive and obey the commandments of a Dæmon; whereas the rationalism, which is in vogue to-day and to which orthodox *Scientism* has affixed its royal sign manual, is the product of mere brain-power, vigorous but crude, of an intellect shut up in its self-complacent cunningness, obfuscated by its infinite but shallow inquisitiveness.

And the secret soul of this Classical culture was not inherited by those who professed to be its champions and adorers—the torch-bearers of the New Enlightenment; no, its direct descendants were to be found among the builders of the Christian civilization. Plato and Pythagoras and Heraclitus and the initiates to the Orphic and the Eleusinian mysteries continued to live in and through Plotinus and Anselm and Paracelsus and the long line of Christian savants and sages. The Middle Age had its own spiritual discoveries and achievements founded on the Cult of the Christ; to these it added what it could draw and assimilate

from the mystic and spiritual traditions of the Græco-Latin world. The esoteric discipline of the Jewish Kabala also was not without influence in shaping the more secret undercurrents of Europe's creative and formative genius. The composite culture which they grew and developed had undisputed empire over Europe for some ten or twelve centuries; and it was nothing, if not at heart a spiritual and religious and other-worldly culture.

Herein lay Europe's soul; and to it turned often and anon the gaze of those who, among a profane humanity, are still the guardians of the Spirit—poets and artists—who, even in the very midst of the maelstrom of Modernism, sought to hark back, back to the rock of the ages. The medievalism and archaicism of which a Rossetti or a Morris, for example, is often accused embodies only a defensive reaction on the part of Europe's soul; it is an attempt to return to her more fundamental life-intuition.

In this connection the history of Ireland's destiny affords an instructive study, since it is symbolic also of Europe's

life-course. It was the natural idealism, the inborn spiritual outlook which Ireland possessed of yore—the Druidic Mysteries were more ancient than the Greek culture and formed perhaps the basis of the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries—which impelled her foremost to embrace the new revelation brought on by Christianity. As she was among the pioneers to champion the cause of the Christ, she became also the fortress where the new cult found a safe refuge when the old world was being overwhelmed and battered to pieces by the onrush of peoples of a dense and rough-hewn nature. When continental Europe lay a desert waste under the heels of the barbarians that almost wiped away the last vestiges of the Classical Culture, it was Ireland who nursed and reared the New Child in her bosom and when the time came sent Him out again to reconquer and revivify Europe. Once more when the tide of Modernism began to rise and swell and carry everything before it, Ireland stood firm and threw up an impregnable barrier. The story of Ireland's struggle against Anglo-Saxon domination is at bottom the story of the

struggle between Europe's soul power and body power. Ireland was almost slain in the combat, physically, but would not lose her soul. And now she rises victorious at long last, her ancient spirit shines resplendent, the voice of the Irish Renaissance that speaks through Yeats and Russell heralds a new dawn for her and who knows if not for Europe and the whole West?

Is it meant that "Medieval obscurantism" was Europe's supreme ideal and that the cry should be: "Back to the Dark Age, into the gloom of Mystic superstitions and Churchian dogmas?" Now, one cannot deny that there was much of obscurantism and darkness in that period of Europe's evolution. And the revolt launched against it by the heralds of the Modern Age was inevitable and justified to some extent; but to say that unadulterated superstition was what constituted the very substance of Middle Age Culture and that the whole thing was more or less a nightmare, is only to land into another sort of superstition and obscurantism. The best when corrupt does become the worst. The truth of the matter is that in its decline the Middle Age clung

to and elaborated only the formal aspect of its culture, leaving aside its inner realisation, its living inspiration. The Renaissance was a movement of reaction and correction against the lifeless formalism, the dry scholasticism of a decadent Middle Age; it sought to infuse a new vitality, by giving a new outlook and intuition to Europe's moribund soul. But, in fact, it has gone a little too far in its career of correction. In its violent enthusiasm to pull down the worn-out edifice of the past and to build anew for the future, it has almost gone to the length of digging up the solid foundation and erasing the fundamental ground-plan upon which Europe's real life and culture reposed and can still safely repose.

If then Europe can cut across the snares that Modernism has spread all about her and get behind the surface turmoils and ebullitions and seek that which she herself once knew and esteemed as the one thing needful, then will she really see what the East means, then only will she find the bond of indissoluble unity with Asia. For the Truth that Europe carried in her bosom is

much bigger than anything she ever suspected even in her best days. And she carried it not with the full illumination and power of a Master, but rather in the twilight consciousness of a servant or a devotee. The Truth in its purity flowed there for the most part much under the main current of life, and its formulations in life were not its direct expressions and embodiments but echoes and images. It is Asia who grasps the Truth with the hand of the Master, the Truth in its full and absolute truth and it is Asia who can show in fact and life how to embody it integrally.

Europe's spiritual soul itself in the last analysis will be found to be only a derivative of Asia's own self. For all the Mysteries and Occult Disciplines—the Christian, the Platonic, the Eleusinian and Orphic, the Kabalistic, the Druidic—which lay embedded in Europe's spiritual and religious genius, when traced further up to the very source, will carry us straight into Asia's lap, perhaps India's.

And Europe in accepting or embracing Asia comes back to the fountain-head of her own inner being and nature.

THE SPIRITUAL GENIUS OF INDIA

What is it that we precisely mean when we say that *India is spiritual*? For, that is how we are accustomed to express India's special 'genius—her backbone, as Vivekananda puts it—the fundamental note of her culture and nature, which distinguishes her from the rest of the world. What then are the distinguishing marks of spirituality? How does a spiritual collectivity live and move—*kim जीता व्रजेता किम्?* And do we find its characteristic gait and feature exclusively or even chiefly in India?

Was not Europe also in her theocratic and medieval ages as largely spiritual and as fundamentally religious as India? Churches and cathedrals and monasteries grew like mushrooms in every nook and corner, in all the countries of Europe; it was the clergy who, with their almost unbounded influence and power, moulded and guided the life and aspiration of the people; devotion to God and love of prayer and pilgrimage were as much in the nature of

the average European of those times as they are in any Indian of to-day; every family considered it a duty and an honour to rear up one child at least to be consecrated to the service of God and the Church. The internal as well as the external life of the men of medieval Europe was steeped through and through in a religious atmosphere.

The whole world, in fact, was more or less religious in the early stages of its evolution; for it is characteristic of the primitive nature of man to be god-fearing and addicted to religious rite and ceremony. And Europe too, when she entered on a new cycle of life and began to reconstruct herself after the ruin of the Græco-Latin culture, started with the religion of the Christ and experimented with it during a long period of time. But that is what was—*Troja fuit*. Europe has outgrown her nonage and for a century and a half, since the mighty upheaval of the French Revolution, she has been rapidly shaking off the last vestiges of her medievalism. To-day she stands clean shorn of all superstition, which she only euphemistically calls

religion or spirituality. Not Theology but Science, not Revelation but Reason, not Magic but Logic, not Fiction but Fact, governs her thoughts and guides her activities. Only India, in part under the stress of her own conservative nature, in part under compelling circumstances, still clings to her things of the past, darknesses that have been discarded by the modern illumination. Indian spirituality is nothing but consolidated medievalism; it has its companion shibboleth in the cry, "Back to the village" or "Back to the bullock cart"! One of the main reasons, if not the one reason why India has to-day no place in the comity of nations, why she is not in the vanguard of civilisation, is precisely this obstinate atavism, this persistent survival of a spirit subversive of all that is modern and progressive.

It is not my purpose here to take up the cause of spirituality and defend it against materialism. Taking it for granted that real spirituality embodies a truth and power by far higher and mightier than anything materialism can offer, and that man's supreme ideal lies there, let us throw

a comparing glance on the two types of spirituality,—the one that India knows and the other that Europe knew in the Middle Ages.

To say that Europe was once as religious and spiritual as India herself is not precisely incorrect, but it is to view the matter from too general a stand-point, almost, we may say, *grosso modo*. In order to arrive at an accurate and precise estimation, and to find out the most significant truths, we have to look a little more closely, observe differences in shade and stress, make certain distinctions. For the things that the ordinary mind indiscriminately designates as religion, spirituality and the like, do not always fall in the same category. These names are often applied to distinct realities, each with its particular *dharma*, norm and form, wide apart from each other, although to the common eye they may appear to be of the same mould and substance.

Thus Religion and Spirituality, two fundamental categories that form one realm when held up in opposition to Materialism, are, when considered by themselves, really very different things and may be even

contradictory to and destructive of each other. What then is Religion? and what, on the other hand, is Spirituality? Religion starts from and usually ends with a mental and emotional approach to realities beyond the mind; Spirituality goes straight forward to direct vision and communion with the Beyond. Religion labours to experience and express the world of Spirit in and through a turn, often a twist, given by the mental being—*manu*—in man; it bases itself upon the demands of the mental, the vital and the physical complex—the triple nexus that forms the ordinary human personality and seeks to satisfy them under a holier garb. Spirituality knows the demands of the Spirit alone; it lives in a realm where the body, the life and the mind stand uplifted and transmuted into their utter realities. Religion is the human way of approaching and enjoying the Divine; Spirituality is the divine way of meeting the Divine. Religion, as it is usually practised, is a special art, one—the highest it may be, still only one—among many other pursuits that man looks to

for his enjoyment and fulfilment; but spirituality is nothing if it does not swallow up the entire man, take in his each and every pre-occupation and new-create it into an inevitable expression of its own master truth. Religion gives us a moral discipline for the internal consciousness, and for the external life, a code of conduct based upon a system of rules and rites and ceremonies; spirituality aims at a revolution in the consciousness and in the being.

Keeping this difference in view, we may at once point out that Europe, when she is non-materialist, is primarily religious and only secondarily spiritual, but India is always primarily spiritual and only secondarily religious. The vein of real spirituality in European culture runs underground and follows narrow and circuitous by-paths; rarely does it appear on the top in sudden and momentary flashes and even then only to dive back again into its subterranean hiding-place; upon the collective life and culture it acts more as an indirect influence, an auxiliary leaven than as a direct and dynamic Force. In India there is an

abundance, a superfluity even, of religious paraphernalia, but it is the note of spirituality that rings clear and high above all lesser tones and wields a power vivid and manifest. We could say in terms of modern biology that spirituality tends to be a recessive character in European culture, while in India, it is dominant.

But when we say that India is spiritual, we do not mean that all or most Indians, or even a very large minority among them, are adepts in spirituality, or that the attachment to life, the passion for earthly possessions, the sway of the six *ripus* are in any way less prevalent in the Indian character. On the contrary, it may well seem to the casual onlooker whose eyes are occupied with the surface actualities of the situation, that the Indian nature, as it is to-day, shut out from this world's larger spaces, cut off from its deeper channels and movements of greater magnitude, has been given over more and more to petty worldlinesses that hardly fill the same space even in the life of peoples who are notorious for their worldly and unspiritual temperament.

It is not so much a question of concrete

realisation, of attainment and achievement arrived at by the Indian people in their work-a-day life, but primarily and above all a question of ultimate valuation, of what they hold as the supreme ideal, of what they cherish in their heart of hearts, and of the extent to which that standard has obtained general currency among them. It is not a fact with which we are concerned, but the force behind the fact, and the special nature and purpose of that force. It is the power that we discover in the general atmosphere, or that emerges in the stress and rhythm of the cultural life of the people, in the level of its inner consciousness, in the expression of its highest and most widespread aspirations, in the particular stamp of its soul.

The psychological atmosphere in India is of a luminous tenuity. Here, it appears, the veil between this world and the other has so thinned away that the two meet and interpenetrate easily and freely; immersed in one, you can at the same time bathe in the other. Owing to the cumulative effect of the *sādhana* of her saints and sages who appeared in countless number down

countless ages, or, perhaps, owing to the grace of a descent into her consciousness, or some immanence there, of the breath and light of a Superior World, India has developed and possesses, already prepared, a magnetic field, a luminous zone of spiritual consciousness; and to enter into it the Indian has only to turn aside, to go round a corner, to take one step forward. However thick and hard the crust of the Ignorance may lie upon the Indian soul, once that soul awakes and is upon the path, it finds itself on a familiar ground; it is in a domain which it has the impression of having frequented often and anon and for long.

But in Europe the division between this world and the other, in the inner consciousness of the people, is more rigorous, a thick wall divides the two and to pass from the one to the other demands a violent break, a total revolution; and even when the Rubicon is crossed, one feels oneself in unfamiliar surroundings, moving in a shadowy world, and with the uncertain and faltering steps of a child.

The average European has a strong

basis of the earth-nature in him; he is heavily enclosed in his physical sheath and firmly placed upon the material world. Therefore he keeps a very stable terrestrial equilibrium and is not easily ousted from his earthly footing; his is not a nature easily upset from its poise, or disturbed by the currents and forces that play about him. But the Indian, both physically and psychically, has a more delicate frame and his footing upon earth is less secure. The balance in his consciousness between the different forces—especially between those of this world and the other—is delicately held; and the adjustment that obtains at a given moment is liable to be disturbed by the least change, either in the inner consciousness, or in the outer conditions.

In other words, when we speak of the spirituality of the Indian people, it is to the *disposition* of their psychic elements that we refer, to the tone and temper of the soul they possess and to a constant nearness of latent spiritual possibilities, that may at any time materialise, and the consequent possibilities of a spiritual impulse, that may at any time awaken.

Other peoples have other and more concrete virtues to be proud of; but the Indian has his soul as his most characteristic possession.

That is not to say that other peoples of the world are soulless, and that India alone may claim to possess the treasure. But no other people has lived so much in and from the soul; none other has sacrificed so much for the sake of this one thing needful. The soul-consciousness in other nations lies veiled behind the more pressing activities and immediate occupations of the external nature; at the most, what is characteristic in them is the soul, not in its pure and fundamental *being*, but expressed, and therefore encased and limited, within some particular mode of *becoming*. In India, on the other hand, the external activities and operations have never altogether swamped or clouded this soul-consciousness; they have been either subjugated to it as minor auxiliaries or totally sacrificed as obstacles. The Indian's soul is not imbedded in some far-off region of his unconscious nature; he has succeeded in raising it up and bringing it forward to the level of his

waking consciousness,—as the gold-tusked Divine Boar lifted the Earth out of the dark depths of the primeval deluge to the light of the Day.

The French, for example, have developed as a people a special characteristic and mental turn that has set its pervading impress upon their culture and civilisation, upon their creations and activities; that which distinguishes them is a fine, clear and subtle rational, logical, artistic and literary mind. France, it has often been said, is the head of modern Europe. The Indians are not in the same way a predominantly intellectual race, in spite of the mighty giants of intellect India has always produced, and still produces. Nor are they a literary race, although a rich and grandiose literature, unrivalled in its own great qualities, is their patrimony. It was the few, a small minority, almost a closed circle, that formed in India the élite whose interest and achievement lay in this field; the characteristic power, the main, life-current of the nation, did not flow this way, but followed a different channel. Among the ancients the Greeks, and among the

moderns the French alone, can rightfully claim as their special genius, as the hallmark of their corporate life, a high intellectual and literary culture. It is to this treasure,—a serene and yet vigorous and organized rational mind, coupled with a wonderful felicity of expression in speech.—that one turns when one thinks of the special gift that modern France and ancient Greece have brought to the heritage of mankind.

Again, the Japanese, as a people, have developed to a consummate degree the sense of beauty, especially as applied to life and living. No other people, not even the old-world Greeks, possessed almost to a man, as do these children of the Rising Sun, so fine and infallible an æsthetic sensibility,—not static or abstract, but of the dynamic kind,—uniformly successful in making out of their work-a-day life, even to its smallest accessories, a flawless object of art. It is a wonder to see in Japan how, even an unlettered peasant, away in his rustic environment, chooses with unerring taste the site of his house, builds it to the best advantage, arranges everything about it in a faultless

rhythm. The whole motion of the life of a Japanese is almost Art incarnate.

Or take again the example of the British people. The practical, successful life instinct, one might even call it the business instinct, of the Anglo-Saxon races is, in its general diffusion, something that borders on the miraculous. Even their Shakespeare is reputed to have been very largely endowed with this national virtue. It is a faculty which has very little to do with calculation, or with much or close thinking, or with any laborious or subtle mental operation,—a quick or active mind is perhaps the last thing with which the British people can be accredited; this instinct of theirs is something spontaneous, almost aboriginal, moving with the sureness, the ruthlessness of nature's unconscious movements,—it is a *tact*, native to the force that is life. It is this attribute which the Englishman draws from the collective genius of his race that marks him out from among all others; this is his *forte*, it is this which has created his nation and made it great and strong.

All other nations have this one, or that

other, line of self-expression, special to each; but it is India's characteristic not to have had any such single and definite *modus vivendi*—what was single and definite in her case was a mode not of *living* but of being. India looked above all to the very self in things, and in all her life-expression it was the soul *per se* which mattered to her,—even as the great Yajnavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi, *ātmanastu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati*. The expressions of the self had no intrinsic value of their own and mattered only so far as they symbolised or embodied or pointed to the secret reality of the Atman. And perhaps it was on this account that India's creative activities, even in external life, were once upon a time so rich and varied, so stupendous and full of marvel. Because she was attached and limited to no one dominating power of life, she could create infinite forms, so many channels of power for the soul whose realisation was her end and aim.

There was no department of life or culture in which it could be said of India that she was not great, or even, in a way, supreme. From hard practical politics

touching our earth, to the nebulous regions of abstract metaphysics, everywhere India expressed the power of her genius equally well. And yet none of these, neither severally nor collectively, constituted her specific genius; none showed the full height to which she could raise herself, none compassed the veritable amplitude of her innermost reality. It is when we come to the domain of the Spirit, of God-realisation that we find the real nature and stature and genius of the Indian people; it is here that India lives and moves as in her own home of Truth. The greatest and the most popular names in Indian history are not names of warriors or statesmen, nor of poets who were only poets, nor of mere intellectual philosophers, however great they might be, but of Rishis, who saw and lived the Truth and communed with the gods, of Avataras who brought down and incarnated here below something of the supreme realities beyond.

The most significant fact in the history of India is the unbroken continuity of the line of her spiritual masters who never ceased to appear even in the midst of her most dark and distressing ages. Even in

a decadent and fast disintegrating India, when the whole of her external life was a mass of ruins, when her political and economical and even her cultural life was brought to stagnation and very near to decomposition, this undying Fire in her secret heart was ever alight and called in the inevitable rebirth and rejuvenation. Ramakrishnā, with Vivekananda as his emanation in life dynamic and material, symbolises this great secret of India's evolution. The promise that the Divine held out in the *Gita* to Bharata's descendant finds a ready fulfilment in India, in Bharata's land, more perhaps than anywhere else in the world; for in India has the Divine taken birth over and over again to save the pure in heart, to destroy the evil-doer and to establish the Right Law of life.

Other peoples may be the arms and the feet and the head of Humanity, but India is its heart, its soul—for she cherishes always within her the Truth that lives for ever, the flaming God-head, the Immortal awake in mortality, as say the Vedas, *amṛto martye-su ṛtavā*.

DIVINE HUMANISM

A good many European scholars and philosophers have found Indian spirituality and Indian culture, at bottom, lacking in what is called 'humanism'.^{*} So our scholars and philosophers on their side have been at pains to rebut the charge and demonstrate the humanistic element in our tradition. It may be asked, however, if such a vindication is at all necessary, or if it is proper to apply a European standard of excellence to things Indian. India may have other measures, other terms of valuation. Even if it is proved that humanism as defined and understood in the West is an unknown thing in India, yet that need not necessarily be taken as a sign of inferiority or deficiency.

But first of all we must know what exactly is meant by humanism. It is, of course, not a doctrine or dogma; it is an attitude, an outlook—the attitude, the outlook that views and weighs the worth of

* Only the other day I found a critic in the *Manchester Guardian* referring to the *Gita* as something frigid and confused!!

man as man. The essential formula was succinctly given by the Latin poet when he said that nothing human he considered foreign to him. It is the characteristic of humanism to be interested in man as man and in all things that interest man as man. To this, however, an important corollary is to be added, that it does not concern itself with things that do not concern man's humanity. The original father of humanism was perhaps the father of European culture itself, Socrates, whose mission it was, as he said, to bring down philosophy from heaven to live among men. More precisely the genesis should be ascribed to the Aristotelian tradition of Socratic teaching.

Humanism proper was born—or reborn—with the Renaissance. It was as strongly and vehemently negative and protestant in its nature, on one side, as it was positive and affirmative on the other. For its fundamental character—that which gave it its very name—was a protest against a turning away from, whatever concerned itself with the supra-human, with God or Self, with heaven or other worlds, with abstract or transcendental realities. The movement was

humanistic precisely because it stood against the theological and theocratical medieval age.

The Græco-Latin culture was essentially and predominantly humanistic. Even so, the medieval culture too, in spite of its theological stress, had a strong basis in humanism. For the religion itself, as has been pointed out, was deeply humanistic, in the sense that it brought salvation and heaven close to the level of human frailty—through the miracle of Grace and the humanity of Christ—and that it envisaged a kingdom of heaven or city of God—the body of Christ—formed of the brotherhood of the human race in its solidarity.

The Indian outlook, it is said, is at a double remove from this type of humanism. It has not the pagan Græco-Roman humanism, nor has it the religious humanism of Christianity. Its spirit can best be rendered in the vigorous imagery of Blake: it surrounds itself

With cold floods of abstraction and
the forests of solitude.

The religious or Christian humanism of the West is in its essential nature the pagan and profane humanism itself, at least an

extension of the same. The sympathy that a St. Francis feels for his leprous brother is, after all, a human feeling, a feeling that man has for man; even his love for an animal or an inanimate object is also a very human feeling, transferred to another receptacle and flowing in another direction. It is a play of the normal human heart, only refined and widened; there is no change in kind.

It goes without saying that, in the East too, there is no lack of such sympathy or fellow-feeling either in the saint or in the ordinary man of the world. Still there is a difference. And the critics have felt it, if not understood it rightly. Indian *bhūtādayā* and Christian charity do not spring from the same source—I do not speak of the actual popular thing, but of the ideal and ideology; even when the manner of expression is similar or the same in both, the spirit and the significance are different. In the East the liberated man, or the man aiming at liberation, may work for the good and welfare of the world, but also he may not; and, what is more important, when he does so work, the spirit is not that

of benevolence or philanthropy, nor is there the ethical sense of duty.

The Indian sage is not and cannot be human in the human way. For the end of his whole spiritual effort is to transcend the human way and establish himself in the divine way, in the way of the Spirit. The feeling he has towards his fellow-beings—men and animals, the sentient and the insentient, the entire creation, in fact—is one of identity in the One Self. And, therefore, he does not need to embrace physically his brother, like the Christian saint, to express or justify the perfect inner union or unity. The basis of his relation with the world and its objects is not the human heart, however purified and widened, but something behind it and hidden by it, the secret soul and self. It was Vivekananda who very often stressed the point that the distinctive characteristic of the Vedantin was that he did not look upon created beings as his brethren, but as himself, as the one and the same self. The profound teaching of the Upanishadic *Rishi* is—what may appear very egoistic and inadmissible to the Christian saint—that one loves the wife or the son or anybody or

anything in the world, not for the sake of the wife or the son or that body or that thing, but for the sake of the self, for the sake of one's own self that is in the object which one seems to love.

The pragmatic man requires an outward gesture, an external emotion to express and demonstrate his kinship with the creation. Indeed the more concrete and tangible the expression, the more human it is considered to be and all the more worthy for it. There are not a few who think that giving alms to the poor is more nobly human than, say, to have the abstract feeling of a wide commonality, experienced solely in imagination or contemplation in the Wordsworthian way.

There is, indeed, a gradation in the humanistic attitude that rises from grosser and more concrete forms to those that are less and less so. At the lowest rung and the most obvious in form and nature is what is called *altruism*, or more especially, philanthropy, that is to say, doing good to others, some good that is tangible and apparent, that is esteemed and valued by the world generally. In an altruism refined and

sublimated, when it is no longer a matter primarily of doing but of feeling, when, from a more or less physical and material give and take, we rise into a vital and psychological sympathy and inter-communion, we have what is humanism proper. Humanism is transfigured into something still higher and finer when, from the domain of personal or individual feeling and sympathy, we ascend to cosmic feeling, to self-identification with the All, the One that is Many. This is the experience that seems to be behind the Buddhistic compassion, *karuṇā*.

And yet there can be a status even beyond. For, beyond the cosmic reality lies the transcendent reality. It is the Absolute, *neti, neti*, into which individual and cosmos, all disappear and vanish. In compassion, the cosmic communion, there is a trace and an echo of humanism—it is perhaps one of the reasons why Europeans generally are attracted to Buddhism and find it more congenial than Hinduism with its dizzy Vedantic heights. But in the status of the transcendent Selfhood, humanism is totally transcended and transmuted; one dwells there in the Bliss that passeth all feeling.

The Upanishadic summit is not suffused with humanism or touched by it, because it is supra-human, not because there is a lack or deficiency in the *human* feeling, but because there is a heightening and a transcendence in the consciousness and being. To man, to human valuation, the Bodhisattva may appear to be greater than the Buddha; even so to the sick a physician or a nurse may seem to be a diviner angel than any saint or sage or perhaps God himself—but that is an inferior view-point, that of particular or local interest.

It is sometimes said that to turn away from the things of human concern, to seek liberation and annihilation in the Self and the Beyond, is selfishness, egoism; on the contrary, to sacrifice the personal delight of losing oneself in the Impersonal so that one may live and even suffer in the company of ordinary humanity, in order to succour and serve it, is the nobler aim. But one may ask, if it is egoism and selfishness to seek delight in one's own salvation beyond, would it be less selfish and egoistic to enjoy the pleasure of living on a level with humanity with the idea of aiding and

uplifting it? Indeed, in either case, the truth discovered by Yajnavalkya, to which we have already referred, stands always justified,—that it is not for the sake of this or that thing that one loves this or that thing, but for the sake of the Self that one loves this or that thing.

The fact of the matter is that here we enter a domain in which the notion of egoism or selfishness has no *raison d' etre*. It is only when one has transcended not only selfishness, but egoism and all sense of individuality that one becomes ready to step into the glory and beatitude of the Self or *Brahman* or *Sunyam*. One may actually and irrevocably pass beyond, or one may return from there (or from the brink of it) to work in and on the world—out of compassion, or in obedience to a special call or a higher Will, or because of some other thing; but this second course does not mean that one has attained a higher status of being. We may consider it more human, but it is not necessarily a superior realisation. It is a matter of choice of vocation only, to use a mundane figure. The Personal and the Impersonal are two co-ordinates

of the same supreme Reality—some choose (or are chosen by) one and others choose (or chosen by) the other, perhaps as the integral Play or the inscrutable Plan demands and determines, but neither is intrinsically superior to the other.

The humanism with which Europe is familiar, both in its profane and religious aspects,¹ would look, from an Indian—Vedantic—standpoint, all ‘human, too human’; it was a European who declared it so. It was for this reason that the Promethean prophet conjured man to transcend his humanity anyhow and rise to a superior status of culture and civilisation—of being and consciousness, as we would say.

Indian spirituality envisages precisely such a transcendence. According to it, the liberated soul, one who lives in and with the *Brahman* or the Supreme Divine, is he who has discarded the inferior human nature and has taken up the superior divine nature. He has conquered the evil of the lower nature, certainly; but also he has gone beyond the good of that nature. The liberated man is seated above the play of the three *Gunas* that constitute the inferior

hemisphere of manifestation, *apara prakṛti*. Human intelligence, human feeling, human sentiment, human motive, even at their best and purest, do not move him. Humanism has naturally no meaning for him. He is no longer human, but supra-human; his being and becoming are the spontaneous expression of a universal and transcendent consciousness. He may not always live and move externally in the non-human way; but even when he appears human in his life and action, his motives are not humanistic, his consciousness lies anchored somewhere else, in the transcendent Will of the Divine that makes him be and do whatever it chooses, human or otherwise.

And yet there is a humanism that is proper to India—it is not 'human humanism', but, as it is called, 'divine humanism'. That is to say, the human formula is maintained, but a new significance, a transcendent connotation is put into it. The general contour of the instrumentation is preserved, but the substance is transmuted. The brain, the heart and the physical consciousness not only change their direction, but their very nature and character. And the Divine

Himself is conceived as such a Divine Person—for the norm of the human personality in this view is an eternal verity in the divine consciousness.

• Esoteric Christianity also has given us the conception of the Human Divine; but it is somewhat different from the Vaishnava revelation which has found rather the Divine-Human. In other words, as I have already said, one has brought down the divinity nearer to human appreciation and has humanised it; in the other, the human has been uplifted and made into an archetypal reality where the human terms are more or less symbols and figures, having not merely a human but a supra-human significance. The entire Vaishnava *Lila* takes place not on this earth at all, but eternally in the eternal world of the inner consciousness—*cinmaya*—behind all earthly (and human) manifestation and expression.

It is the cult of the Divine Human which enunciates the mystic truth that *Man* is greater than all and surpasses even the Vedic Law (which aims usually at the impersonal Absolute). But Man here is to be

understood as the Divine Person in his human norm, not the human man at all, as modern humanists of our country would like to have it. It does not mean the glorification of man's human attributes and movements, even if they be most *sattwic* and idealistic; it refers rather to the divinised type, the archetype that is eternally in the super-consciousness. And when such a Man lives and acts on earth, he does so in a manner and measure that do not belong to this plane of humanity familiar to us.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE UNTHINKABLE

God is not an autocrat—a despot like the Czar or the Shahan Shah, pedestalled high above and ruling over his subject-slaves according to his fancy and caprice, issuing ukases and firmans which suffer no delay or hindrance in their execution.

God is, if he is at all to be compared to a king, more like a constitutional sovereign. He does not act as he chooses and pleases. There is a system, a plan, a procedure of governance; there are principles and laws and rules, and he abides by them. There are even agents and intermediaries, officers and servants— instruments through whom he works out his purpose. He is the supreme *dharmaṛājā*, the lord and guardian of the Law. Not that he is bound by his constitution, in the sense that he is a slave to it and cannot alter it, even when he finds it necessary to do so, but that once the rules of the game have been laid, he agrees to follow them so long as he plays the particular game.

The Divine does not announce his presence or advent by miracles, by sudden catastrophes and upheavals. The power, the knowledge or the love that belongs to him is just like the air that surrounds us, whose silent and tranquil, yet constant pressure energises the heart of living things, whose very translucency is the stuff out of which is fashioned Earth's richly variegated life.

The Divine does not compel, he persuades. The individual soul is born out of the Divine and forms a part and parcel of the Divine, but it has been given freedom—freedom to live and move as it chooses. And although the Divine Will in the cosmos acts as a continuous pressure in the form of the evolutionary urge pushing inferior Nature gradually towards an unfolding of the Divine's own Consciousness and Nature, inherent in it and overarching it, yet it is a force that lies in the background and its fulfilment is only eventual. There is a long interim period of a full five act drama in which the soul, through gathering experiences, freely moves and explores and seeks, falters and errs, and finally comes to its own; it comes to realise that the freedom

it had, even the freedom to descend and enter into the region of the Ignorance, was accorded to it for the play of self-choice, for the joy of self-discovery, for the delight of self-surrender and self-fulfilment.

* * *

The Divine has two aspects in its manifestation, the one in which it is the All, the infinite and equal Brahman, spread wide as to include the two extremes, Knowledge and Ignorance, Birth and Death, impartially containing or consisting of the dualities—it is the Reality that *is*; the other is the reality that becomes—it is not the All, but the Over-All, the Transcendent that manifests and is being embodied; it is not the duality of Knowledge and Ignorance, but Supra-knowledge; it is not the duality of Birth and Death, but Immortality; it is the Divine in its own Truth-Nature that lies on one side beyond and behind, at the origin, and on the other, involved and submerged in the play of the All and gradually emerging out of the All, transforming it and giving it a concrete form even in the likeness of the original transcendent supra-Nature.

Both the Divines are to be envisaged

and established in one single undivided realisation—the static and equal and impartial Brahman forming the basis; the unshakable calm and absolute freedom, and the dynamic emergent Brahman revealing more and more in the manifested creation a definite divine Purpose and Aim and Fulfilment. The one accepts and contains everything, for it is everything; the other, on the basis of that wide acceptation, chooses and selects, keeps back or dissolves and annihilates, in the progression of its increasing light, the darkness, the ignorance that form one part of the dual Nature.

* * *

The actual manifestation, the world as it stands, is in the hands of the Undivine. The Divine has to establish his reign through a working out of struggling and combating forces. The evil that man does or suffers from comes from his slavery to the Undivine: likewise the good that he is capable of doing or receiving is the sign of his freedom from that slavery and of his openness to the secret Divine.

The Undivine means the obscure separateness of the Ignorance, the darkness of

Inferior Nature. The Divine, from his superior status, has cast himself down and is scattered and concretised as the ignorant creation, he has consented to be degraded and embedded into Matter, in order to quicken Matter gradually, to illumine and transform it and invest it with the Divine's own glory. The whole dynamics of creation consists in the interaction of these two forces, one apparent and pragmatic and patent, the other behind and involved and latent. The elements and forces of the Ignorance, while they appear to move in the cycles of their inexorable Law, are gradually led by the stress of the involved Spirit, to evolve and change, and finally express and incarnate that which it now negates, that which is the Spirit unveiled in its pristine authenticity.

A day will come when it is the Divine that will reign upon earth, the Divine in his transcendent Delight and Knowledge and Power and Purity, and human life shall embody the Law of the Truth.

The thing may not happen to-day or within a short period, according to the human standard. Man's smallness, in its

impatience, once could not contemplate a span of more than a few thousand years. But we have been forced to learn to calculate earth's life and evolution in astronomical figures, and the human stage is being found to have extended farther and farther into a dim and immemorial past. Millenniums are nothing in the march of the cosmic play. Things are done here-in the measures of eternity; it is only the narrowness of the human consciousness that wants to cut up what is eternal and infinite into convenient bits and parcels.

The Day will come towards which the whole creation has been moving since the beginning of time, it will come inevitably in due course—it may be to-day or tomorrow, it may be a decade hence, or it may even be a century or a millennium hence; it will come all the same.

THE STANDPOINT OF INDIAN ART

Indian art is not in truth unreal and unnatural, though it may so appear to the eye of the ordinary man or to an eye habituated to the classical tradition of European art. Indian art, too, does hold the mirror up to Nature; but it is a different kind of Nature, not altogether this outward Nature that the mere physical eye envisages. All art is human creation; it is man's review of Nature; but the particular type of art depends upon the particular view-point that the artist takes for his survey. The classical artist surveys his field with the physical eye, from a single point of observation and at a definite angle; it is this which gives him the *sine qua non* of his artistic composition, anatomy and perspective. And the genius of the artist lies very much in the selection of a vantage ground from which his survey would throw into relief all the different parts of the objective in the order and gradation desired; to this vantage ground the entire construction is organically—one

could 'even say, in this case, geometrically —correlated.

Indian art, too, possesses a perspective and an anatomy; it, too, has a focus of observation which governs and guides the composition, in the ensemble and in detail. Only, it is not the physical eye, but an inner vision, not the angle given by the retina, but the angle of a deeper perception or consciousness. To understand the difference, let us ask ourselves a simple question: when we call back to memory a landscape, how does the picture form itself in the mind? Certainly, it is not an exact photograph of the scenery observed. We cannot, even if we try, re-form in memory the objects in the shape, colour and relative positions they had when they appeared to the physical eye. In the picture represented to the mind's eye, some objects loom large, others are thrown into the background and others again do not figure at all; the whole scenery is reshuffled and rearranged in deference to the stress of the mind's interest. Even the structure and build of each object undergoes a change; it does not faithfully re-copy Nature, but gives

the mind's version of it, aggrandizing certain parts, suppressing others, reshaping and re-colouring the whole aspect, metamorphosing the very contour into something that may not be "natural" or anatomical figure at all. Only we are not introspective enough to observe this phenomenon of the mind's alchemy; we think we are representing with perfect exactitude in the imagination whatever is presented to the senses, whereas in fact we do nothing of the kind; our idea that we do it is a pure illusion.

All art is based upon this peculiar virtue of the mind that naturally and spontaneously transforms or distorts the objective world presented to its purview. The question, then, is only of the degree to which the metamorphosis has been carried. At the one end, there is the art of photography, in which the degree of metamorphosis is at its minimum; at the other, there seems to be no limit, for the mind's capacity to dissolve and recreate the world of sense-perception is infinite—and many modern schools of European art have gone even beyond the limit that the "unnatural" Indian art did not consider it necessary to

transgress. Now, the classical artist selects a position as close as he can to the photographer, tries to give the mind's view of Nature and creation, as far as possible, in the style and norm of the sense-perceptions. He takes his stand upon these and from there reaches out towards whatever imaginative reconstructions are justified within the bounds laid out by them. The general ground-plan is, almost rigorously, the form given by the physical eye. The art of the East, and even, to a large extent, the art of medieval Europe, followed a different line. Here the scheme of the sense-perceptions was rejected, the artist sought to build on other foundations. His procedure was, first, to get a focus within the mind, to discover a psychological standpoint, and from there and in accordance with the subtler laws and conventions of an inner vision create a world that is unique and stands by itself. The aim was always to build from within, at the most, from within outwards, but not from without, not even from without inwards. This inner world has its own laws and they differ from the laws of optics which govern the physical

sight; but there is no reason why it should be called unnatural. It is unnatural only in the sense that it does not copy physical Nature; it is quite natural in the sense that it is a faithful reproduction of another, a psychological Nature.

Indian art is pre-eminently and *par excellence* the art of this inner re-formation and re-evaluation. It has thrown down completely and clearly the rigid scaffolding of the physical vision. We take here a sudden leap, as it were, into another world, and sometimes the feeling is that everything is reversed; it is not exactly that we feel ourselves standing on our heads, but it is, as if, in the Vedic phrase, the foundations were above and all the rest branched out from them downwards. The artist sees with an eye, and constructs upon a plan that conveys the merest excuse of an actual visible world. There are other schools in the East which have also moved very far away from the naturalistic view; yet they have kept, if not the form, at least, the feeling of actuality in their composition. Thus a Chinese, a Japanese, or a Persian masterpiece cannot be said to be "natural" in the sense in

which a Tinterotto, or even a Raphael is natural; yet a sense of naturalness persists, though the appearance is not naturalistic. What Indian art gives is not the feeling of actuality or this sense of naturalness, but a feeling of truth, a sense of reality—of the deepest reality.

Other art shows the world of creative imagination, the world reconstructed by the mind's own formative delight; the Indian artist reveals something more than that—the faculty through which he seeks to create is more properly termed *vision*, not imagination; it is the movement of an inner consciousness, a spiritual perception, and not that of a more or less outer sensibility. For the Indian artist is a seer or *rishi*; what he envisages is the mystery, the truth and beauty of another world—a real, not merely a mental or imaginative world, as real as this material creation that we see and touch; it is indeed more real, for it is the basic world, the world of fundamental truths and realities behind this universe of apparent phenomena. It is this that he contemplates, this upon which his entire consciousness is concentrated; and all his art consists in

giving a glimpse of it, bodying it forth or expressing it in significant forms and symbols.

European—the Far Western—art gives a front-view of reality; Japanese—the Far Eastern—art gives a side-view; Indian art gives a view from above.* Or we may say, in psychological terms, that European art embodies experiences of the conscious mind and the external senses, Japanese art gives expression to experiences that one has through the subtler touches of the nerves and the sensibility, and Indian art proceeds through a spiritual consciousness and records experiences of the soul.

The frontal view of reality lays its stress upon the display of the form of things, their contour, their aspect in mass and volume and dimension; and the art, inspired and dominated by it, is more or less a sublimated form of the art of photography.

* I am tempted to add a fourth view—the view from behind or the occult view—something of which may be found in the art of Egypt in its most ancient and naive aspects, in the art of archaic Tibet, in the remnants of some of the old-world submerged civilizations, now known as “primitive” (Polynesian, for example).

The side-view takes us behind the world of forms, into the world of movement, of rhythm. And behind or above the world of movement, again, there is a world of typical realities, essential form-movements, fundamental modes of consciousness in its universal and transcendent status. It is this that the Indian artist endeavours to envisage and express.

A Greek Apollo or Venus or a Madonna of Raphael is a human form idealized to perfection,—moulded to meet the criterion of beauty which the physical eye demands. The purely æsthetic appeal of such forms consists in the balance and symmetry, the proportion and adjustment, a certain roundness and uniformity and regularity, which the physical eye especially finds beautiful. This beauty is akin to the beauty of diction in poetry.

Apart from the beauty of the mere form, there is behind it and informing it what may be called the beauty of character, the beauty revealed in the expression of psychological movement. It corresponds to the beauty of rhythm in poetry. Considered æsthetically, the beauty of character, in so

far as it is found in what we have called *formal* art, is a corollary,—an ornamental and secondary theme whose function is to heighten the effect of the beauty of form, or create the atmosphere and environment necessary for its display.

A Chinese or a Japanese piece of artistic creation is more of a study in character than in form; but it is a study in character in a deeper sense than the meaning which the term usually bears to an European mind or when it is used in reference to Europe's art-creations.

Character in the European sense means that part of nature which is dynamically expressed in conduct, in behaviour, in external movements. But there is another sense in which the term would refer to the inner mode of being, and not to any outer exemplification in activity, any reaction or set of reactions in the kinetic system, nor even to the mental state, the temperament, immediately inspiring it, but to a still deeper status of consciousness. A Raphael Madonna, for example, purposed to pour wholly into flesh and blood the beauty of motherhood. A Japanese

Madonna (a Kwanon), on the other hand, would not present the "natural" features and expressions of motherhood; it would not copy faithfully the model, however idealized, of a woman viewed as mother. It would endeavour rather to bring out something of the subtler reactions in the "nervous" world, the world of pure movements that is behind the world of form; it would record the rhythms and reverberations attendant upon the conception and experience of motherhood somewhere on the other side of our wakeful consciousness. That world is made up not of forms, but of vibrations; and a picture of it, therefore, instead of being a representation in three-dimensional space, would be more like a scheme, a presentation in *graph*, something like the ideography of the language of the Japanese themselves, something carrying in it the beauty characteristic of the calligraphic art.*

* It is not my intention to say that the art of character, even in the deeper sense, is totally absent in Europe. On the contrary, it is that which has been growing day by day,—although perhaps often along rather odd lines. It is a moot question how far this orientation is due to the influence of the Eastern,

An Indian Madonna owes ~~its~~ conception to an experience at the very other end of consciousness. The Indian artist does not at all think of a human mother; he has not before his mind's eye an idealized mother, nor even a subtilized feeling of motherhood. He goes deep into the very origin of things, and from there seeks to bring out that which belongs to the absolute and the universal. He endeavours to grasp the sense that motherhood bears in its ultimate truth and reality. Beyond the form, beyond even the rhythm, he enters into *bhāva*, the spiritual substance of things. An Indian Madonna (*Ganesh-janani*, for example) is not solely or even primarily a human mother, but the mother, universal and transcendent, of sentient and insentient creatures and supersentient beings. She embodies not the human affection only, but also the parallel sentiment that finds play in the lower and in the higher creations as well. She expresses in her limbs not only the gladness of the mother animal tending

especially, the Far Eastern art. In speaking of Europe, I was referring to the bedrock of the artistic tradition of Europe, its fundamental classical tone.

its young, but also the exhilaration that a plant feels in the uprush of its sap while giving out new shoots, and, above all, the supreme *ānanda* which has given birth to the creation itself. The lines that portray such motherhood must have the largeness, the sweep, the authenticity of elemental forces, the magic and the mystery of things behind the veil.

It is this quality which has sometimes made Indian art seem deficient in its human appeal: the artist chose deliberately to be non-human, even in the portrayal of human subjects, in order to bring out the universal and the transcendent element in the truth and beauty of things. Man is not the measure of creation, nor human motives the highest or the deepest of nature's movements; at best, man is but a symbol of truths beyond his humanity.

It is this characteristic that struck the European mind in its first contact with the Indian artistic world and called forth the criticism that Indian culture lacks in humanism. It is true, a very sublimated humanism finds remarkable expression in Ajanta, —and perhaps it is here that the Western

eye began to learn and appreciate the Indian style of beauty; even in Ajanta, however, in the pieces where the art reaches its very height, mere humanism seems to be at its minimum. And if we go beyond these productions that reflect the mellowness and humaneness of the Buddhist Compassion, if we go into the sanctuary of the Brahmanic art, we find that the experiences embodied there and the method of expression become more and more "anonymous"; they have not, that is to say, the local colour of humanity, which alone makes the European mind feel entirely at home. Europe's revulsion of feeling against Indian art came chiefly from her first meeting with the multiple-headed, multiple-armed, expressionless, strangely poised Hindu gods and goddesses, so different in every way from ordinary human types.

Indian art had to be non-human, because its aim was to be supra-human, unnatural, because its very atmosphere was the supra-natural.

ART AND KATHARSIS

Art, we all know, is concerned with the Beautiful; it is no less intimately connected with the True; the Good too is in like manner part and parcel of the æsthetic movement. For, Art not only delights or illumines, it uplifts also to the same degree. Only it must be noted that the uplifting aimed at or effected is not a mere moral or ethical edification—even as the Truth which Art experiences or expresses is not primarily the truth of external facts and figures in the scientific manner, nor the Beauty it envisages or creates the merely pleasant and the pretty.

There is a didactic Art that looks openly and crudely to moral hygiene. And because of this, there arose, as a protest and in opposition, a free-lance art that sought to pursue art for art's sake and truth for truth's sake—even if that truth and that art were unpleasant and repellent to the morality-ridden sophisticated consciousness. Or perhaps it may have been the other way round: because of the degeneracy of Art from

its high and serious and epic nobility and sublimity to lesser levels of æsthetic hedonism and dilettantism that the didactic took its rise and sought to yoke art to duty, to moral welfare and social service. Not that there is an inherent impossibility of moralising art becoming good art in its own way; but great art is essentially a-moral—not in the sense of being infra-moral, but in the sense of being supra-moral.

Art does not tend towards the Good in the manner of the moralist. It does not teach or preach that virtue is to be pursued and vice to be shunned, that a good deed is rewarded and a wrong one punished. Poetic justice, of the direct and crude style, is a moral code or dogma, and, if imposed upon the æsthetic movement, serves only to fetter and curb and twist it. Art opens the vision to a higher good than what the conventions of moral idealism can frame. Great art does not follow the lines laid down by the ethical mentality, not only because this mentality cannot embody the true truth, but also because it does not give us the Good which art should aim at, that is to say, the purest and the highest good.

Aristotle speaks of the purifying function of the tragic art. How is the purification effected? By the evocation of the feelings of pity and terror. For such feelings widen the sympathies, pull us out of our small egoistic personal ephemeral pleasures and put us in contact with what is to be shared and enjoyed in wide commonality. Tragedy, in this way, initiates the spectator into the enjoyment that is born not of desire and gain but of detachment and freedom.

The uplifting power of Art is inherent in its nature, for Art itself is the outcome of an uplifted nature. Art is the expression of a heightened consciousness. The ordinary consciousness in which man lives and moves is narrow, limited, obscure, faltering, unhappy—it is the abode of all that is evil and ugly; it is inartistic. The poetic zeal, enthusiasm or frenzy, when it seizes the consciousness, at once lifts it high into a state that is characterised by wideness and depth and a new and fresh exhilarating intensity of perception and experience. We seem to arrive at the very fountain-head, where things take birth and are full of an unspoilt life and power and beauty and

light and harmony. A line burdened with the whole tragedy of earthly existence such as Shakespeare's—

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain . . .
or the Virgilian syllables ringing, as it were, with the crash of destiny and the doom of the world—

feror ingenti circumdata nocte,
Invalidasque tibi tendens, heu! non, tua palmas . . .

even if they make us sad do not depress the soul; it is a divine sadness fraught with a profound calm and a strange poignant sweetness of secret delight. The rhythm and the sound and the suggestions so insinuate themselves into our nerve and blood that these seem to be sublimated—as if by a process of oxygenation—to a finer substance, a purer and more limpid and vibrant valency. A consciousness opens in our very flesh and marrow that enables us to pierce the veil of things and pass beyond and understand—see and experience—the why and the how and the whither of it all. It is a consciousness cosmic in its purview and disposition, which even like the Creator could contemplate all and declare it all as

. MALADY OF 'THE CENTURY

. Indeed, this is the Good which Art at its highest seeks to envisage and embody—the *summum bonum* that accompanies a summit consciousness. It is idle to say that all or most poets have this revelatory vision of the Seer—Rishi—but a poet is a poet in so far as he is capable of this vision; otherwise he remains more or less either a moralist or a mere æsthetic.

Whatever is ugly and gross, all the ills and evils of life—that is to say, what appears as such to our external mind and senses—when they have passed through the crucible of the poet's consciousness undergoes a sea-change and puts on an otherworldly beauty and value. We know of the alchemy of poetic transformation that was so characteristic of Wordsworth's manner and to which the poet was never tired of referring, how the physical and brute nature—even a most insignificant and meaningless and unshapely object in it attains a spiritual sense and beauty when the poet takes it up and treasures it in his tranquil and luminous and in-gathered consciousness, his “inward eye”. A crude feeling, a raw passion, a tumult of the senses, in the same way, sifted through

the poetic perception, becomes something that opens magic casements, glimpses the silence of the farthest Hebrides, wafts us into the bliss of the invisible and the beyond.

The voice of Art is sweetly persuasive —*kāntāsammita*, as the Sanskrit rhetoricians say—it is the voice of the beloved, not that of the school-master. The education of Poetry is like the education of Nature: the poet said of the child that “grew in sun and shower”—

And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

Even so the beauty of poetic creation, when we contemplate it and live in it, automatically and inevitably steals into our consciousness, works a subtle change in our nature and by elevating and refining it makes us, for the moment at least, less crude and obscure and earthy things that we usually are.

HAMLET: A CRISIS OF THE EVOLVING SOUL

The consciousness that rules over the tragedy of *Hamlet*, the destiny that works itself out in the play of the forces portrayed in that great drama, are the consciousness and the destiny of the human soul at a most fateful crisis, a crucial turning-point in the course of its evolution. The soul, lodged in the human embodiment, moves forward and upward, towards a greater and greater self-expression and self-expansion, a continual heightening and widening of its consciousness, a constant sublimation and transfiguration of its mode of being and living. And in the progressive gradient so pursued, there are certain stages or level-crossings that can be clearly marked out in view of their importance and significance.

Shakespeare himself records, in two other of his major dramas, the mystery of two such stages preceding the one he deals with in *Hamlet*: one in *Macbeth* and the other in *King Lear*. Indeed these three

mighty creations form a trilogy with the Karma of the human soul at different crises as its theme. *King Lear* represents human consciousness low down in the scale of evolution, almost at its start—a nature primitive and barbarian. We seem to go back into a prehistoric world, a paleolithic age—the domain of utter ignorance, of vulgar greed and hunger, where one sees the rank play of a raw and crude and aboriginal nature. Man is here simply the eater, a true brother of the rest of the animal kind, one in blood with the tiger and the wolf. He is the sheer biological or *vital* being—the *Rakshasa*—into whom the light of the Mind has not yet descended, at least not to the extent of effecting an appreciable change in his original and primitive texture. It is a world ruled by the mode of *tamas*.*

* The angelic Cordelia is a ray that has strayed down from some higher region, to evolve hereafter, not for immediate fruition and fulfilment. It is the Light that shines always even in this naughty world, a spark of the Grace that still relieves the blight that mars an otherwise sinful earth. She is the symbol of a promise or prophecy that will justify itself sometime in the future, but for the moment the burden of the gloom is too much upon her and she is engulfed in it and sacrificed.

a truly rational being make Hamlet the very flower of an evolving humanity,

Over against the personality of Hamlet stands another which represents false height, the wrong perfection, the counterfeit ideal. Polonius is humanity arrested in its path of straight development and deviated into a *cul-de-sac* of self-conceit and surface urbanity, apparent cleverness and success and pretentious and copy-book morality. When one has outgrown the barbarian, one runs the risk of becoming a snob or philistine. It is a side table-land, as it were, on mid-heights, the standard perhaps of a commoner humanity, but which the younger ideal has to transcend or avoid or even to destroy, so that it may find itself and live its own life. To the philistine too the mere biological man is a taboo, but he seeks to confine human nature into a scheme of codes and maxims and lifeless injunctions and prohibitions. He is also the man of Reason but without the higher inflatus, the living and creative Something More—the poetry, the vision, the dream that would transfigure the merely pragmatic, practical, worldly wise—the

bourgeois—into the princely aristocratic idealist, elevate the drab *terre à terre* To-day into the glory of a soaring To-morrow.

* * *

What is the crisis that confronts the ascending visionary soul? What is the obstacle that the Idealist has to face, the danger zone that he has to traverse in order to arrive at the realisation of his ideal?

In Hamlet we have a dreamer, an ardent optimist, a young enthusiast who has lived so long in his own rosy world, in his *tour d'ivoire*, and thought that that was the only world, even the world as it is outside. Also in the simplicity of his faith he dedicated all his love and admiration, all his yearning for a sweet and glorious ideal, to a child of common humanity who appeared to him to be an emblem and promise of Realisation. Alas, the promise had not attained the strength and force that would lead inevitably to maturity and fruition, the child was yet too loyal to its origin to cut away from its moorings and soar with him.

The crisis then is the revelation to the

aspiring dream-lifted soul that the original and aboriginal humanity that seemed to have been traversed and transcended and left far behind is not wholly obliterated; indeed it is still there in its stark reality. The light and air and space and colour of the high dreamland are reared upon dark and dingy abysses, "this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire is none other than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours." All the wisdom and culture and virtue and apparent beauty in human nature cannot prevent a man from becoming an arrant knave and a woman from being a whore, even if she were one's own mother.

This disillusionment is the crisis at which the soul has arrived—this tearing down of the painted arras that hid the naked horror of man's beastly nature and the ugly vanity and stagy show that the world is. The revelation was so sudden and stunning to the innocent and aspiring soul that it lost for the moment all its bearings, its natural strength and capacity and will, and fell from its high status into the slough of dark and despondent impotency.

Another person—Laertes—placed in an analogous situation but not worried by the promptings of idealism and the sense of discrepancy between the ideal and the real, takes the world as it is, considers it all right and moves straight to his purpose; he is not a divided being, but in full and integral possession of himself and of his instruments of action—even though this solid pragmatism does not avail him much in the end.

The crisis in Hamlet reminds us of another somewhat similar one, that is the basis and starting-point of the great episode in the *Mahabharata*—the *Gita*. Arjuna, the ideal hero and man of action, in absolute self-confidence and certitude, with no doubt or hesitation about anything in the world, advances into the very thick of the bloody strife—and lo! all is changed as with a magic wand! What was to him a moment before a clear duty, an evident act of righteousness, the noblest of deeds, now appears nothing less than an inglorious slaughter. The bow of victory slips from the hand of the mighty warrior and, all nerve and tremor, he sinks down in gloom and dejection and complete confusion.

'Arjuna tided over the crisis as he could avail himself of the knowledge of the way out and the necessary help that was given by the Divine Guide. Hamlet bears the full crash of doom upon his head and makes others also share its consequences with him. At one point, however, he seemed to make just a move towards the right solution of the difficulty. He finds that the avoidance of the Evil by self-destruction—which is a common and natural temptation in like situations—is no solution: it may lead you into a still greater evil. One has to face the evil, stand and fight it. Once this is decided, the right course for the hero (the Aryan fighter, as the *Gita* would say) would be to live

"As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Has taken with equal thanks—" (Act III, Sc. 2).

Hamlet thus seems to fall upon the teaching of *samatā*—*equanimity*—with which the *Gita* begins Arjuna's initiation into the secret of Deliverance. He has had a glimpse of the divine portals from a distance; but he did not know how to proceed in the straight and narrow path; he is diverted

into an Asuric handling of the forces of lower nature and is himself broken in the process.

A poignant vision or experience of evil in God's world which otherwise appears so worth living in, the perception of the canker in the rose, has been the turning-point of many a destiny. It has been the occasion of the birth of saints and sages, souls that have traversed beyond and found the solution of the enigma. It has also hurled back into confusion and ruin souls that faced the Sphinx but could not answer her riddle—such, for example, as were Hamlet and Faust.

In these latter the human consciousness has reached its high water-mark of normal development. They are the finest expression of man's capacities and powers in the ordinary nature. Here we have the play of the higher, even perhaps the highest ranges of the Mind—the mind, that is to say, of the poet and the philosopher. But here also stands revealed the counterfoil, the obverse of that high achievement—the feet of clay on which is reared the head of gold, the flesh that is tied irrevocably to the spirit.

civilisations brought about by modern scientific researches. A modern man, who is representative of the age, when he looks close into himself, would find in him a texture of consciousness, the warp of which is spread out from the culture of the Greenlander in the North Pole to that of the Polynesian near the South Pole as well as from the culture of the Anglo-Saxon in the far West to that of the Korean and Nipponese in the far East; and the woof consists of traditions and legends threading past the Egyptian, the Sumerian and Atlantean glyphs and runes, and forward to present-day ideologies—totalitarianism and proletarianism or others like and unlike.

A modern artist when he creates, as he cannot but create himself, will have to embrace and express something of this peculiar cosmopolitanism or universalism of to-day. When Ezra bursts into a Greek hypostrophe or Eliot chants out a Vedic mantra in the very middle of King's English, we have before us the natural and inevitable expression of a fact in our consciousness. Even so, if we are allowed the liberty of comparing the flippant with the serious,

even so, a fact of Anglo-veracular consciousness was given graphic expression in the well-known lines of 'the famous Bengali poet and dramatist, D. L. Roy, ending in

“*Āmara* (we) . . .
A queer amalgam of Sasadhar,*
Huxley and goose.”

Indeed it has been pointed out that the second great characteristic of modern art is the curious and wondrous amalgam in it of the highly serious and the keenly comic. It is not, however, the Shakespearean manner; for in that old-world poet, the two are merely juxtaposed, but they remain separate; very often they form an ill-assorted couple. At best, it is a mechanical mixture —the æsthetic taste of each remains distinct, although they are dosed together. In a modern poet, in Ezra, or to a greater degree, in Eliot, the tragic and the comic, the serious and the flippant, the climax and the bathos are blended together, chemically fused, as part and parcel of a single whole. Take, for example, the lines from Ezra

* Old style orthodox Pandit.

quoted above, the obvious pun (Greek *tin'* or *tina*, meaning "some one" and English "tin"), the cheap claptrap, it may be explained, is intentional: the trick is meant to bring out a sense of lightness and even levity in the very heart of seriousness and solemnity. The days of Arnold's high seriousness, of grand style pure and severe, are gone. To-day the high lights are no longer set on a high pedestal away and aloof, they are brought down and immixed with the low lights and often the two are indistinguishable from each other. The grand style rides always on the crest of the waves, the ballad style glides in the trough; but the modern style has one foot on either and attempts to make that gait the natural and normal manner of the consciousness and poetic movement. Here, for example, is something in that manner as Eliot may be supposed to illustrate:

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast,
lights

Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

Well, the question is, has it succeeded? For here, as in everything else, nothing succeeds

like success. Any theory may be as good as any other, but its test is only in the *suit accompli*. Neither Ezra nor Eliot has that touch of finality and certainty, the definitiveness and authenticity beyond doubt, the Q. E. D. that a major and supreme creator imposes.

Bottrall, a modernist poet himself, says in effect the same thing. His poetic credo runs in this wise:

Nightingales, Anangke, a sunset or the meanest
flower
Were formerly the potentiates of poetry,
But now what have they to do with one another
With Dionysus or with me?
Microscopic anatomy of ephemerides,
Power-house stacks, girder-ribs, provide a crude
base
But man is what he eats, and they are not bred
Flesh of our flesh, being unrelated
Experientially, fused in no emotive furnace.

What Bottrall means is this in plain language: we reject the old-world myths and metaphors, figures and legends, worn-out ornaments—moon and star and flower and colour and music—we must have a new set of symbols commensurate with our present-day mentality and environment—stone and steel and teas and talkies; yes, we

must go in for new and modern terms, we have certainly to find out a menu appropriate to our own æsthetic taste, but, Bottrall warns, and very wisely, that we must first be sure of digesting whatever we choose to eat. In other words, a new poetic mythology is justified only when it is made part and parcel, flesh and blood and bone and marrow, of the poetic consciousness. Bottrall's epigram "A man is what he eats" can be accepted without demur; only it must also be pointed out that things depend upon how one eats (eating well and digesting thoroughly) as much as what one eats —bread or manna or air and fire and light.

The modernist may chew well, but, I am afraid, he feeds upon the husk, the chaff, the offal. Not that these things too cannot be incorporated in the poetic scheme; the spirit of poetry is catholic enough and does not disdain them, but can transfigure them into things of eternal beauty. Still how to characterise an inspiration that is wholly or even largely preoccupied with such objects? Is it not sure evidence that the inspiration is a low and slow flame and does not possess the transfiguring white heat? Bottrall's

own lines do not seem to have that quality; it is merely a lesson—a rhetorical lesson, at best—in poetics.

* A poet—a true poet—does not compose to exemplify a theory; he creates out of the fullness of an inner experience. It may be very true that the modern poetic spirit is seeking a new path, a new organisation, a “new order”, as it were, in the poetic realm: the past forme and formulæ do not encompass or satisfy its present inner urge. But solution of the problem does not lie in a sort of mechanical fabrication of novelties. A new creation is new, that is to say, fresh and living, not because of skilful manipulation of externals, but because of a new, a fresh and living inspiration. The fountain has to be dug deep and the revivifying waters released.

It is a simple truth that we state and it is precisely this that we have missed in the present age. Chaucer created a new poetic world, Shakespeare created another, Milton yet a third, the Romantics—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Byron—each of them has a whole world to his credit. But this they achieved, not because of any theory

they held or did not hold, but because each of them delved deep and struck open an unfathomed and unspoilt Pierian spring. And this is how it should be. In this age, even in this age of modernism, a few poets have actually shown how or what that can be,—a Tagore, a Yeats or A.E., by the bulk of their work, others of lesser *envergure*, in brief scattered strophes and stanzas—such lines, for example, from Eliot

Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon—

or such other out of even Cecil Day Lewis:

My lover of flesh is wild,
And willing to kiss again;
She is the potency of earth
When woods exhale the rain.

My lover of air, like Artemis
Spectrally embraced,
Shuns the daylight that twists her smile
To mineral distaste.

In general, however, and as we come down to more and more recent times we find we have missed the track. As in the material field to-day, we seek to create and achieve by science and organisation, by a Teutonic regimentation, as in the moral

life we try to save our souls by attending to rules and regulations, codes and codicils of conduct, even so a like habit and practice we have brought over into our æsthetic world. But we must remember that Napoleon became the invincible military genius he was, not because he followed the art of war in accordance with laws and canons set down by military experts; neither did Buddha become the Enlightened because of his scrupulous adherence to the edicts which Asoka engraved centuries later on rocks and pillars, nor was Jesus the Christ because of his being an exemplar of the Sermon on the Mount.

The truth of the matter is that the spirit bloweth where it listeth. It is the soul's realisation and dynamic perception that expresses itself inevitably in a living and authentic manner in all that the soul creates. Let the modernist possess a soul, let it find out its own inmost being and he will have all the newness and novelty that he needs and seeks. If the soul-consciousness is burdened with a special and unique vision, it will find its play in the most categorically imperative manner.

What the modernist usually expresses is his brain or a part of it, his small vital desires and velleities, his sensational reactions or some sections of these. He can do that certainly, but he can do that well only when he has reached and touched the soul that is behind them: for once this is found, those become vehicles and instruments, echoes and sparks, symbols and signatures of that one thing needful.

TAGORE—POET AND SEER

A great literature seems to have almost invariably a great name attached to it, one name by which it is known and recognised as great. It is the name of the man who releases the inmost potency of that literature, and who marks at the same time the height to which its creative genius has attained or perhaps can ever attain. Homer and Virgil, Dante and Shakespeare, Goethe and Camoens, Firdausi in Persian and Kalidasa in classical Sanskrit, are such names—*numina*, each being the presiding deity, the godhead born full-armed out of the poetic consciousness of the race to which he belongs. Even in the case of France whose language and literature are more a democratic and collective and less an individualistic creation, even there one single Name can be pointed out as the life and soul, the very cream of the characteristic poetic genius of the nation. I am, of course, referring to Racine, Racine who, in spite of Molière and Corneille and Hugo, stands as the most representative French

poet, the embodiment of French æsthetic *par excellence*.

Such a great name is Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali literature. We need not forget Bankim Chandra, nor even Madhusudan: still one can safely declare that if Bengali language and literature belonged to any single person as its supreme liberator and fosterer—*savitā* and *pūṣā*—it is Rabindranath. It was he who lifted that language and literature from what had been after all a provincial and parochial status into the domain of the international and universal. Through him a thing of local value was metamorphosed definitively into a thing of world value.

The miracle that Tagore has done is this: he has brought out the very soul of the race—its soul of lyric fervour and grace, of intuitive luminosity and poignant sensibility, of beauty and harmony and delicacy. It is this that he has made living and vibrant, raised almost to the highest pitch and amplitude in various modes in the utterance of his nation. What he always expresses in all his creations, is one aspect or another, a rhythm or a note of the soul

movement. It is always a cry of the soul, a profound experience in the inner heart that wells out in the multifarious cadences of his poems. It is the same *motif* that finds a local habitation and a name in his short stories, perfect gems, masterpieces among world's masterpieces of art. In his dramas and novels it is the same element that has found a wider canvas for a more detailed and graphic notation of its play and movement. I would even include his essays (and certainly his memoirs) within the sweep of the same master-note. An essay by Rabindranath is as characteristic of the poet as any lyric poem of his. This is not to say that the essays are devoid of a solid intellectual content, a close-knit logical argument, an acute and penetrating thought movement, nor is it that his novels or dramas are mere lyrics drawn out and thinned, lacking in the essential elements of a plot and action and character. What I mean is that over and above these factors which Tagore's art possesses to a considerable degree, there is an imponderable element, a flavour, a breath from elsewhere that suffuses the entire creation, something

that can be characterised only as the soul-element. It is this presence that makes whatever the poet touches not only living and graceful but instinct with something that belongs to the world of gods, something celestial and divine, something that meets and satisfies man's deepest longing and aspiration.

I have been laying special stress upon this aspect of Tagore's genius, because humanity is in great need of it to-day, because all has gone wrong with the modern world since it lost touch with its soul and was beguiled into a path lighted by false glimmers and will-o'-the-wisps, lures of a superficial and infra-human consciousness, or into the by-ways and backwashes and aberrations of a sophisticated intellectualism.

Tagore is modern, as modern as reasonably and sensibly one can be; he is a modern, but not a modernist. One is modern when one is inspired and moved by the spirit of the Time, one is modernist when one is bound to the letter, to the external formulas of the law of the *Zeit-Geist*. You remain modern if the new consciousness enters and dwells in your nature and character, you

become modernist as soon as it degenerates into a *tic* and a mannerism.

The passage of medievalism to modernism can be defined as the passage from the local and parochial to the general and universal. The medieval consciousness is a segmented or linear consciousness: it is the view, at a time, from one particular angle of vision. The modern consciousness, on the other hand, is or tends to be a global view-point, a circular consciousness. The unilateral mentality proper to medievalism may be deep and penetrating and far-reaching, extending to the hidden and high realities, even to the highest and the most secret—to God and Soul and Immortality; it would still be a one-sided vision and achievement. It is the characteristic function of the modern consciousness to survey things not from a single point of view, but from all points of view, even the most disparate and incommensurable. The relativity of all experiences—not necessarily their illusoriness—is the great modern discovery; it is the parent of modern (scientific) scepticism and agnosticism; it is also the basis of a large, a global synthesis, which was never

possible till now and which is the promise of to-morrow.

Modernism implies a natural broadening of the mind and life, a greater capacity to understand and endorse and appreciate divergent and even contrary and contradictory experiences and stand-points. Thus, brotherhood to the medieval man meant bringing together mankind under the dominion of one cult or creed—it is the extension of a tribal feeling. Brotherhood in a modern consciousness would mean an inner union and commensurability that can subsist even in the midst of a great diversity of taste and feeling and experience.

Tagore is modern in respect of all these higher aptitudes that man has gained to-day. He has the brilliance and curiosity of an alert and strong intelligence, the refined sensibility of a pagan and scientific intellect, he has an infinite sense of irony and humour and, above all, he has that in him,—a genial plasticity and sympathy and a warm sense of “wide commonalty”,—which makes him easily a citizen of the world, ‘feeling absolutely at home all over the world.

The breath of modernism that Tagore

has brought into the life and letters of the Bengali race is, I repeat, suffused with a soul-feeling—a sense of refinement and dignity, wideness and catholicity and urbanity in the inner make-up of life-attitude and consciousness, a feeling that one no longer lives in his village, confined to its insular limits, but that one lives a life coterminous with human life at large and at its best; one is cosmopolitan in the noblest sense of the word and one has to move and act and speak in a manner becoming such a position. A high sense of all the aristocratic virtues, plus a certain sunshine of wit and playful intelligence that prevents the serious and the lofty from becoming grim and Dantesque are part of the gifts that Tagore has brought us and made a living element of our literary and even social character.

Tagore is modern, because his modernism is based upon a truth not local and temporal, but eternal and universal, something that is the very bed-rock of human culture and civilisation. Indeed, Tagore is also ancient, as ancient as the Upanishads. The great truths, the basic realities experienced and formulated by the ancients ring

clear and distinct in the core of all his artistic creation. Tagore's intellectual make-up may be as rationalistic and scientific as that of any typical modern man. Nor does he discard the good things (*preya*) that earth and life offer to man for his banquet; and he does not say like the bare ascetic: *anyā vāco vimūñcatha*, "abandon everything else". But even like one of the Upanishadic Rishis, the great Yajnavalkya, he would possess and enjoy his share of terrestrial as well as of spiritual wealth—*ubhayameva*. In a world of modernism, although he acknowledges and appreciates mental and vital and physical values, he does not give them the place demanded for them. He has never forgotten the one thing needful. He has not lost the moorings of the soul. He has continued to nestle close to the eternal verities that sustain earth and creation and give a high value and purpose to man's life and creative activity.

In these iconoclastic times, we are liable, both in art and in life, to despise and even to deny certain basic factors which were held to be almost indispensable in the old world. The great triads—the True, the

Beautiful and the Good, or God, Soul and Immortality—are of no consequence to a modernist mind: these mighty words evoke no echo in the heart of a contemporary human being. Art and Life meant in the old world something decent, if not great. They were perhaps, as I have already said, framed within narrow limits, certain rigid principles that cribbed and cabined the human spirit in many ways; but they were not anarchic, they obeyed a law, a dharma, which they considered as an ideal, a standard to look up to and even live up to. The modernist is an anarchic being in all ways. He does not care for old-world verities which seem to him mere convention or superstition. Truth and Beauty and Harmony are non-existent for him: if at all they exist they bear a totally different connotation, the very opposite of that which is normally accepted.

The modernist does not ask: is it good? is it beautiful? He asks: is it effective? is it expressive? And by effectiveness and expressiveness he means something nervous and physical. Expressiveness to him would mean the capacity to tear off the veil over

what once was considered not worth the while or decent to uncover. A strange recklessness and shamelessness, an unhealthy and perverse curiosity, characteristic of the Asura and the Pisacha, of the beings of the underworld, mark the movement of the modernist. But I forget. The Modernist is not always an anarchist, for he too seeks to establish a New Order; indeed he arrogates to himself that mission and declares it to be his and his alone. Obviously it is not the order of the higher gods of Olympus: these have been ousted and dethroned. We are being led back to the mysteries of an earlier race, reverting to an infra-evolutionary status, into the arcana of Thor and Odin, godlings of an elemental Nature.

In such a world Tagore is a voice and a beacon from over the heights of the old world declaring and revealing the verities that are eternal and never die. They who seek to kill them do so at their peril. Tagore is a great poet: as such he is close to the heart of Bengal. He is a great Seer: as such humanity will claim him as its own.

1271-48 Printed at The Bangalore Press, Mysore Road, Bangalore City,
by G. Srinivasa Rao, Superintendent

